The word “comfort” awakens feelings of warmth, freedom from emotional and physical concerns, safety, security, being pampered and cared for and, above all, re-inforcing dignity, hope and positive expectation. These attributes and feelings are embodied in “thuthuzela”, the Xhosa word for comfort, are realised in the establishment of the THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES.
*Thuthuzela Care Centres* are one-stop facilities that have been introduced as a critical part of South Africa’s anti-rape strategy, aiming to reduce secondary trauma for the victim, improve conviction rates and reduce the cycle time for finalising cases.

The *Thuthuzela* project is led by the NPA’s *Sexual Offences and Community Affairs Unit* (SOCA), in partnership with various donors as a response to the urgent need for an integrated strategy for prevention, response and support for rape victims.

Since its establishment, the SOCA Unit has been working to develop best practices and policies that seek to eradicate victimisation of women and children, while improving prosecution, particularly in the areas of sexual offences, maintenance, child justice and domestic violence.

**The context: Rape is complex and has a wide impact in society …**

![Diagram](image)

**How is the victim affected?**
- **Family**
  - Strained relations with significant others
  - Alienation of loved ones
  - Neglect of children / spouse

- **Workplace**
  - Diminishing productivity
  - No safe havens
  - Job loss
  - Insecurity

- **Health / Physical**
  - Post traumatic stress disorder
  - Sleeping problems
  - Feelings of detachment
  - Outbursts of anger

- **Society**
  - Vigilantism
  - Paranoia of others as potential aggressors

- **Criminal Justice**
  - Doubt that the perpetrator will be brought to justice
  - Doubt that a guilty verdict will be reached
  - Insufficient, or lack of, support

**What problems are experienced?**

Note: Adapted from Generic Post Traumatic Stress Analysis (Vogelman, 1992)
Workings of the Thuthuzela Care Centres?

*Thuthuzela Care Centres* are in operation in public hospitals in communities where the incidence of rape is particularly high. They are also linked to sexual offences courts, which are staffed by prosecutors, social workers, investigating officers, magistrates, health professionals, NGOs and police, and located in close proximity to the centres.

The centres are managed by a top level inter-departmental team comprising Justice, Health, Education, Treasury, Correctional Services, Safety and Security, Local Government, Home Affairs, Social Development and designated civil society organisations.

*Thuthuzela*’s integrated approach to rape care is one of respect, comfort, restoring dignity and ensuring justice for children, women and men who are victims of sexual violence. When reporting, the rape victim is removed from crowds and intimidating environments, such as at the police station, to a more victim-friendly environment before being transported by ambulance to the *Thuthuzela* one stop care centre at the hospital. Enroute, the victim receives comfort and crisis counselling from a trained ambulance volunteer.
Once at the *Thuthuzela Care Centre*, the victim is ushered to a quiet, private space, welcomed by the site-coordinator. A doctor is immediately summoned to conduct a medical examination. The victim is then given information on the procedures to be performed. The victim (patient) signs a consent form for medical examination and blood specimens. If the medical examination happens within 24 hours of the rape, after which the victim is offered the opportunity to take a bath or shower and to change into clean clothes. After that, the investigating officer on call at the centre takes the victim’s statement. Thereafter, the victim receives appropriate medication and is given a follow-up date for further medical treatment, before being transported home.

“This process ensures that service providers are available to a rape survivor in one location, rather than her being shuttled around throughout the criminal justice system”, says Advocate Thoko Majokweni, Head of the SOCA unit.

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**Thuthuzela Model**

- **Sexual offenses court**
  - Prosecution of SO cases only
  - Leads weekly strategy meetings and case assessment
  - Consults with victims throughout court process
  - Ensures speedier, more effective prosecutions

**OBJECTIVES:**
- Reduce Secondary Victimisation
- Improve Conviction Rate
- Reduce the time to finalisation of cases

**RAPE INVESTIGATION AND CARE CENTRE**
Investigating officers, health professionals, counselors, site coordinator, victim assistance officer

**Rape investigation and care centre**
- Centralises all rape investigations
- Ensures prompt transportation, examination and care of victims
- Increases communication between prosecutor, police and victim
- Develops best practices for speedy, sensitive investigation of cases
- Ensures accurate data collection and analysis
- Immediate crisis counselling for victims

**RAPE VICTIMS REPORT AT LOCAL POLICE STATION, CLINICS, HOSPITALS OR OTHER CBOs**
Caring for the young victims of rape

Doctors at *Thuthuzela Care Centres* have reported seeing increased numbers of child victims. Sadly, some of them are as young as three months. Accordingly, the need for specially trained child-friendly nurses or care-givers to receive and comfort children before they are taken for examination is critical.

*Baragwanath Thuthuzela Care Centre, child friendly environment*
Various donors have also contributed to making the centres child-friendly, through offering technical expertise for the installation and availability of special tools. These include two way-mirrors, posters, drawings, and anatomically correct dolls comprising five family members, to help prepare children to appear in court, should that become necessary.

Impact of the Thuthuzela Care Centres
The Thuthuzela model has already improved the process of reporting and prosecuting rape and other sexual offences, and reducing secondary trauma to survivors as the entire process takes place in a dignified and friendly environment.

According to Advocate Majokweni, “At the heart of the success of the Thuthuzela approach is the professional medical and legal interface and a high degree of cooperation between victim and service providers from reporting through investigation and prosecution of the crime, leading up to conviction of the offender. Offender conviction rates are up too. Higher levels of awareness have resulted in an increased numbers of cases reported at police stations and taken immediately to a Thuthuzela Care Centre”.

Play therapy in child friendly Thuthuzela Care Centre facilities
Services offered at the *Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs)*

- Welcome and comfort from a site co-ordinator or nurse.
- An explanation of how the medical examination will be conducted and what clothing might be taken for evidence.
- A consent form to sign that allows the doctor to conduct the medical examination.
- A nurse in the examination room.
- After the medical examination, there are bath or shower facilities for the victims to use.
- An investigation officer will interview the survivor and take his/her statement.
- A social worker or nurse will offer counselling.
- A nurse arranges for follow-up visits, treatment and medication for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV and AIDS.
- A referral letter or appointment will be made for long-term counselling.
- The victim (survivor) is offered transportation home by an ambulance or the investigating officer.
- Arrangements for the survivor to go to a place of safety, if necessary.
- Consultations with a specialist prosecutor before the case goes to court.
- Court preparation by a victim assistant officer.
- An explanation of the outcome and update of the trial process by a case manager.
### THE THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES (TCCs)

1. **TCC Mamelodi**  
   Mamelodi Hospital  
   Tel: 012-801 2717  
   Fax: 012-841 8384  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Refiloe Bahula

2. **TCC Natalspruit**  
   Natalspruit Hospital  
   Tel: 011-909 1002/3/6/9  
   Fax: 011-909 2929  
   Contact Person:  
   Mr Jerry Ramashaba

3. **TCC Soweto, Gauteng**  
   Nthabiseng Thuthuzela  
   Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital  
   Tel: 011-933 1229 / 3346  
   Fax: 011-933 1140  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Julia Rachitanga

4. **TCC Libode, Umtata: Eastern Cape**  
   St Barnabas Hospital  
   Tel: 047-568 6274  
   Fax: 047-568 6004  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Themba Msuthu

5. **TCC Mdantsane, East London: Eastern Cape**  
   Cecilia Makiwane Hospital  
   Tel: 043-761 2023  
   Fax: 043-761 6277  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Nosisi Nangu

6. **TCC Mannenberg, Western Cape**  
   GF Jooste Hospital  
   Tel: 021-691 6194  
   Fax: 021-691 7962  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Mandisa Nongonongo

7. **TCC Mafikeng**  
   Mafikeng Hospital  
   Tel: 018-383 7000  
   Fax: 018-383 7000  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Takalani Makhado

8. **TCC Umlazi**  
   Prince Mshiyeni Hospital  
   Tel: 031-907 8496  
   Fax: 031-906 1836  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Lusanda Khumalo

9. **TCC Phoenix Crisis Centre**  
   Mahatma Ghandi Hospital  
   Tel: 031-502 2338  
   Fax: 031-502 2372  
   Contact Person:  
   Ms Thenjiwe Mthembu

10. **TCC Galeshewe, Kimberly**  
    Northern Cape Hospital  
    Tel: 053-830 8900  
    Fax: 053-830 8906  
    Contact Person:  
    Ms Linda Le Roux

*For further information on Thuthuzela Care Centres, please contact Adv Thoko Majokweni or Ms Phumeza Mafani at the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) at 012 845-6136/1 or contact the NPA at tel (012) 845 6000*